East Face Vegetation Management Project
Scenery Resource Report Existing Condition

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Introduction

Scenic quality is an important amenity in our lives. People's interests and expectations regarding ecosystems help establish desired aesthetic conditions for the varied landscapes. Scenery provides the setting for all activities experienced by forest visitors, and in this case scenery is the highlight for the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway and the Anthony Lakes Recreation Area in the south end of the project area. Several creeks flow to the valley bottom intersecting the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway adding distinct variety with riparian vegetation and presence of water. Each recreational setting is comprised of scenic attributes that are derived by the environmental context of topography, geology, and climate. These underlying factors are expressed and highlighted by the scenic attributes that they support. Scenery, just as any other resource, must be cared for and managed for future generations. The activities proposed by the East Face Vegetation Management Project (hereafter, East Face project area) potentially affect the current and future condition of these valued scenic resources. Managing scenery resources involves the process of analyzing effects, implementing scenic character goals and applying scenic conservation design features to achieve the WWNF Forest Plan desired conditions and direction for scenery resources.

The landscape character goal for the East Face project area is to maintain a naturally appearing to slightly altered landscape character that expresses predominately natural processes in the scenic viewsheds and travel routes. A transitional approach to move the high density stands towards a lower density species pattern and composition, becoming more fire resilient and ecologically sustainable in time is desirable for the landscape character. Enhancement of large tree viewing opportunities from travel routes, viewpoints, and recreation destinations is desirable. There is opportunity to increase landscape variety by creating and maintaining a series of specific plant stages that leave a diversity of different age classes and a variety of natural appearing open spaces. From a scenery enhancement approach, ecologically sound landscapes can also be aesthetically pleasing as well as sustainable, being reflective of the inherent natural disturbance regimes that are in scale to the appropriate vegetative type, whether it is the natural role of fire, insects and/or disease. When the amount of disturbance exceeds the natural ecosystem parameters, the risk of unnatural catastrophic level disturbances increases and can cause a dramatic change to the existing scenery and landscape character.

The primary purpose of this report is to disclose the effects of the alternatives to scenery resources.

Affected Environment

Existing Condition

Existing Landscape Character

Local residents, recreation users and tourists all value the scenery within the East Face project area. The landscape character is predominately a naturally appearing to slightly altered forested environment viewed in the foreground, middleground and background of the designated viewsheds of Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, Interstate 84, Anthony Lakes Recreation Area and the numerous developed recreation sites located in the planning area In the project area the landscape variety ranges from the common landscape character type typical of the Blue Mountains to unique habitats located throughout the landscape and spectacular scenery associated with Anthony Lakes Recreation Area (USDA 1982). The East Face project area is located approximately 12 miles west of the town of North Powder, Oregon and is located south of the City of La Grande Municipal watershed, north of the North Fork John Day Wilderness, and west of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Elkhorn Wildlife Area. Several road corridors travel through the project area and combine to make loops and provide access to many types of developed and dispersed recreation sites, private land and residences, state and Bureau of Land Management forest and range lands and over mountain ridgetops to adjacent watersheds.

The East Face project area is not visible from towns and communities, but the entire project area encompasses portions of 4 different Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The planning area straddles two counties (Baker and Union), includes 1,224 acres of BLM lands, encompasses portions of 4 different wildland urban interface areas (WUI's) and includes over 20 miles of shared boundary with private, state and Bureau of Land Management forest and range lands. Within these WUI areas there are numerous buildings and residences along with industrial and non-industrial private forest and range lands. In addition, the planning area encompasses the highly used Anthony Lakes

Recreation Area which includes ski resort facilities, numerous campgrounds, recreational trails and recreation residences. The project area is located at Townships 5, 6 and 7 South, Ranges 36, 37, and 38 East.

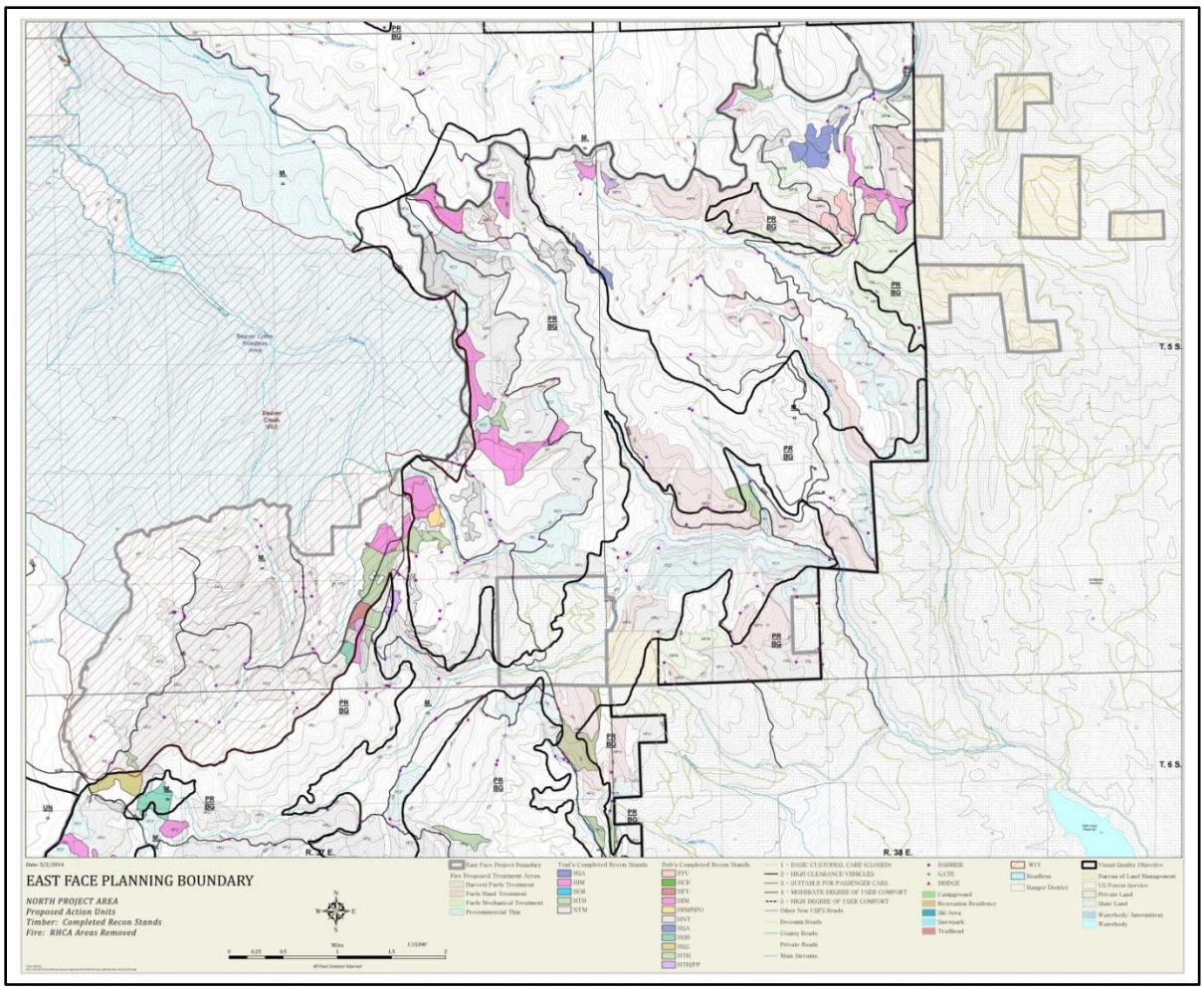
Landscape Scenic Viewsheds

The East Face project area is managed according to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (1990). The management areas (MA) are: MA 1 (timber production), MA 3 (wildlife/timber), MA 3A (wildlife/timber summer range), MA 4 (wilderness), MA 6 (backcountry), MA 15 (old-growth preservation) and MA16 (admin and recreation sites retention). The project area is approximately 47,621 acres located of national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands located on the east face of the Elkhorn Mountains between Anthony Lakes and Ladd Canyon. Due to the large spatial area, the East Face Vegetation Management Project area has been divided into 4 separate landscape areas for assessing scenic effects based on landscape visibility and sensitivity levels for scenic travel routes. The Visual Quality Objectives (VQO's) are designated from Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, Interstate 84 and the Anthony Lakes Recreation Area as well as several secondary forest travel routes. The 4 landscape areas are:

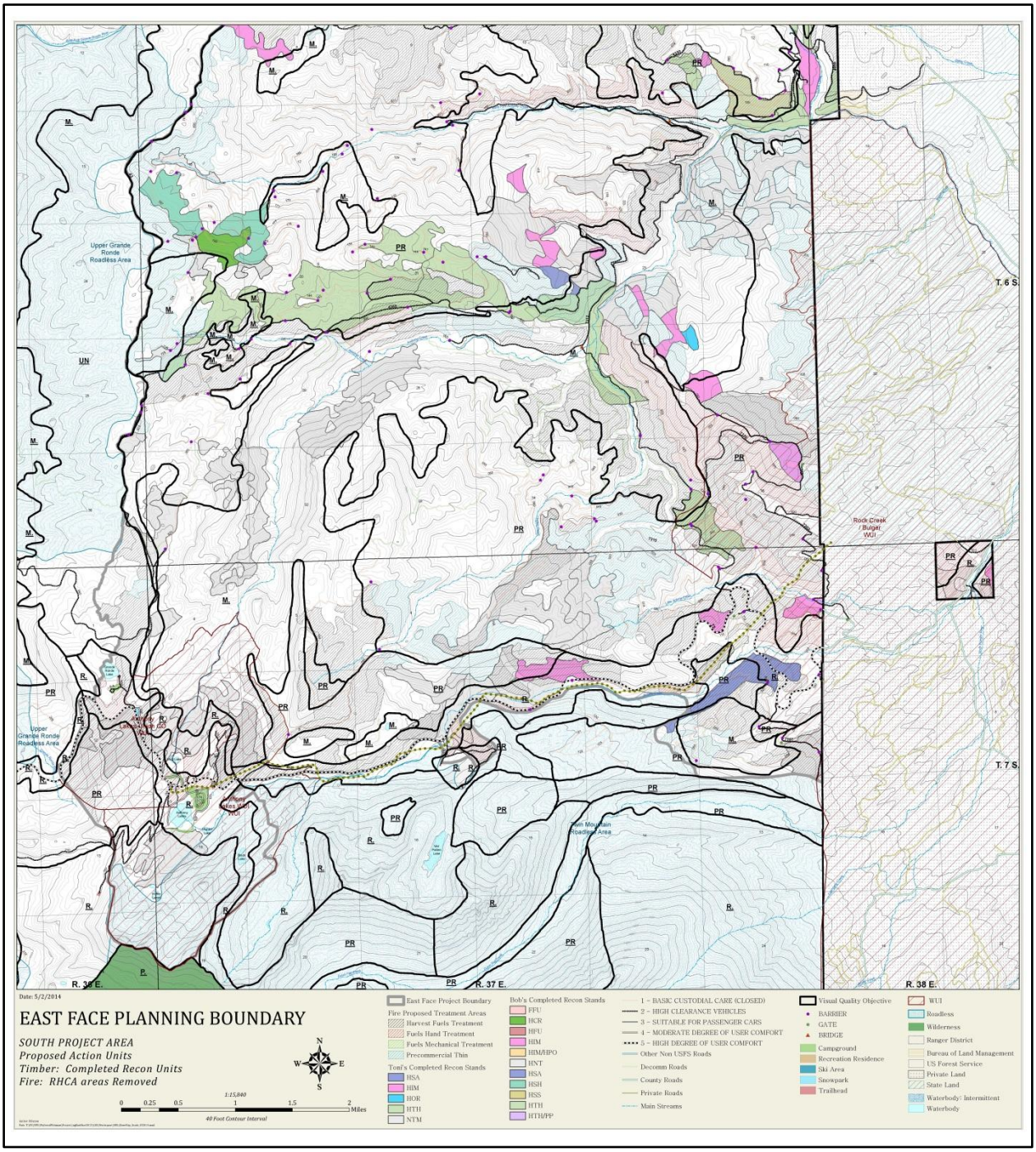
1. Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway (National Forest Road 73) – Retention VQO Foreground, Retention to Partial Retention Middleground and Partial Retention Background from I-84
2. Anthony Lakes Recreation Area - Retention VQO Foreground and Middleground
3. Forest Road 43 Ladd Canyon to Anthony Lakes Recreation Area – Partial Retention VQO to Modification VQO Foreground and Middleground
4. North Fork Wolf Creek Forest Road 4315 – Partial Retention VQO to Modification VQO Foreground and Middleground

The following maps and table display the VQO's/Scenic Integrity Objectives:

Visual Quality Objectives North Side Project Area



Visual Quality Objectives South Project Area


Upper Grande Ronde Roadless Area
Rock Creek / Bugal WUI
Upper Grande Ronde Roadless Area
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 36 E.
R. 37 E.
R. 38 E.
Date: 5/2/2014
EAST FACE PLANNING BOUNDARY
SOUTH PROJECT AREA
Proposed Action Units
Timber: Completed Recon Units
Fire: RHCA areas Removed
N
W
E
S
1:15,840
0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles
40 Foot Contour Interval
East Face Project Boundary
Fire Proposed Treatment Areas
Harvest Fuels Treatment
Fuels Hand Treatment
Fuels Mechanical Treatment
Precommercial Thin
Toni's Completed Recon Stands
RSA
HIM
HOR
HTH
NTM
Bob's Completed Recon Stands
FFU
HCR
HFU
HIM
HIM/RPO
HNT
HSA
HSH
HSS
HTH
HTH/PP
1 - BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)
2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES
3 - SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CARS
4 - MODERATE DEGREE OF USER COMFORT
5 - HIGH DEGREE OF USER COMFORT
Other Non USFS Roads
Decomm Roads
County Roads
Private Roads
Main Streams
Visual Quality Objective
BARRIER
GATE
BRIDGE
Campground
Recreation Residence
Ski Area
Snowpark
Trailhead
WUI
Roadless
Wilderness
Ranger District
Bureau of Land Management
US Forest Service
Private Land
State Land
Waterbody: Intermittent
Waterbody

Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway – National Forest Road 73 (Retention VQO Foreground, Retention to Partial Retention Middleground) and Partial Retention Background from I-84

The Elkhorn Scenic Byway is the main travel route from the communities of North Powder, La Grande & Baker City on the east side of the project area and traverses over to the North Fork John Day River on the west. Destinations along the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway in the East Face project area include Baker Valley Scenic Viewpoint, Dutch Flat Trailhead, Van Patten Lake Trailhead, Elkhorn Crest Trailhead and Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail and the Anthony Lakes Ski Resort and Recreation Area. East Face provides a backdrop setting viewed from I-84. The scenic byway passes through the project area for approximately 7 miles.

The travel corridor is an enclosed canyon setting with views of creek lined riparian valleys that transition to broader distant views as it reaches Anthony Lake Recreation Area. Rock outcrops add to scenic variety. . In the East Face project area the viewshed is natural appearing in landscape character. Large tree character is seen in areas along the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, the Ponderosa pine stands are park like and highly scenic with views into the stand. There is opportunity to highlight views of larger ponderosa pine trees in the area by clearing around the tree boles to have the boles stand out more and reduce the encroaching grand fir that are crowding the space. Along the travel route, there is evidence of a severe insect infestation that is out of range for a healthy forest. An existing powerline traverses along the Highway and crosses it several times and currently blends into the landscape viewed from the travel route, the scale is small and rustic. The powerline corridor is visible as a cleared linear corridor from Anthony Lakes Ski Area. Safety of the highway and powerline is a high priority since it is the main access in and out of Anthony Lakes area.

The vegetative character viewed along the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway is predominately a highly textured dense vegetated forest consisting of Ponderosa pine, Western Larch, Grand-fir and Douglas-fir, characteristic of a forest that has not had natural disturbance for a long period of time. The highly valued Ponderosa pine and Western larch are becoming out competed by Grand–fir and Douglas-fir. The viewshed is a mixture of natural appearing to slightly altered. The vegetative character is a multi storied coniferous stand with natural openings blending in

Baker Valley Viewpoint and Dense Vegetation along Viewshed

Anthony Lakes Recreation Area (Retention VQO Foreground and Middleground)

The Anthony Lakes Recreation Area is a popular year round destination area that offers downhill skiing and snowboarding, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, developed camping, fishing, mountain biking, access to special use recreation residences, developed trailheads, Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail and many other activities associated with outdoor recreation. Anthony Lake and Mud Lake are special places in the area. Distant views of mountain peaks and large expansive views are seen from the ski area slopes. The spectacular Twin Mountain roadless area is located on the south side of Highway 73, providing a scenic backdrop setting for Anthony Lakes Recreation Area and areas of the Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway.

View from Anthony Lakes Ski Resort

The developed ski resort facility adds a rustic urban landscape character with the built environment associated with facilities and operations. In addition, the special use residential Floodwater Flats tract is located in the valley bottom north of the ski area. There has been fuels reduction work done around the immediate perimeter of the Floodwater Flats summer homes (200 foot buffer with hand treatment) in the Bear Butte area. Here the ground is visible in places, rock boulders are more exposed for viewing. Slash on the ground is still evident but will become subdued in time as it weathers or is further removed or chipped.

Floodwater Flats summer home fuels reduction

The vegetative character viewed in the Anthony Lakes Recreation Area is predominately a highly textured dense vegetated forest consisting of Ponderosa pine, Western Larch, Grand-fir and Douglas-fir, characteristic of a forest that has not had natural disturbance for a long period of time. The highly valued Ponderosa pine and Western larch are becoming out competed by Grand–fir and Douglas-fir. The viewshed is a mixture of natural appearing to slightly altered. The vegetative character is a multi-storied coniferous stand with natural openings of meadows and lakes blending in.

Mud Lake – Special Place

Forest Road 43 Ladd Canyon to Anthony Lakes Recreation Area (Partial Retention to Modification VQO Foreground and Middleground)

Ladd Canyon Road begins off Interstate 84 and transitions to the Forest Road 43, it is a primary travel route that follows for approximately 25 miles. The road is the boundary for the East Face project on the west side. The condition of the road is easily accessible by standard vehicles out of La Grande for the first 19 miles where ii is graveled until reaching Rainbow Road 5215 then it transitions to a rougher primitive road for the last 6 miles until reaching the Anthony Lakes Recreation Area. There are no developed recreation sites along the travel route but the area is used for dispersed recreation activities of driving for pleasure, sight-seeing, hunting, camping, accessing other forest road networks in the area.

Typical landscape view from Ladd Canyon Forest Road

The vegetative character is predominately a highly textured dense vegetated forest consisting of Ponderosa pine, Western Larch, Western White Pine, Grand-fir and Douglas-fir. The highly valued Ponderosa pine and Western larch and Western White Pine are becoming out competed by Grand–fir and Douglas-fir.

Shelterwood removal seen along travel route

The vegetative character is a multi-storied coniferous stand with natural openings blending in. Mountain Pine beetle infestations have changed the landscape character from a healthy green forest canopy to one that is becoming brown, the scale is out of the historic natural range and beginning to dominate the landscape. The forest is not as resilient, opportunity to increase the scenic stability here. The area has been harvested in several entries in the past where shelterwood prescriptions have opened up the dense stands to a more open character. The viewshed is a mixture of natural appearing to slightly altered and altered.

North Fork Wolf Creek Forest Road 4315 (Partial Retention to Modification VQO Foreground and Middleground)

North Fork Wolf Creek Forest Road 4315 is accessed off County Road 104 on the east end of the project area or from Ladd Canyon Forest Road 43. It travels through the project are for approximately 6 1/2 miles. The road is single lane gravel with turnouts that primarily follows along the North Fork Wolf Creek riparian area for most of the route and flows into Wolf Creek Reservoir out of the project area. It is an enclosed route travelling along the valley bottom with steep ridgelines encompassing the sides, views are limited to the foreground, rock outcrops are scenic adding to variety in the viewshed. The travel route is popular for dispersed recreational activities, camping along the creek in areas and for accessing Ladd Canyon Forest Road 43. Large tree character is seen along the travel route, the Ponderosa pine stands are park like and highly scenic with views into the stand. The viewshed is a mixture of natural appearing to slightly altered along the travel route. The vegetative character is a multi-storied coniferous stand intermixed with riparian vegetation.

Typical view from Wolf Creek FR and large trees

Scenic Attractiveness

"Scenic attractiveness is the primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty of a landscape and of the positive response it evokes in people." Based on commonly held perceptions of the beauty of landform, vegetation pattern, composition, surface water characteristics, and land use patterns and cultural features, the scenery is rated on a three point scale:

- Class A – Distinctive, where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics and cultural features combine to provide unusual, unique or outstanding scenic quality.
- Class B – Typical, where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics and cultural features combine to provide ordinary or common scenic quality.
- Class C – Indistinctive, where the landscape does not have characteristics that add to the variety, unity, vividness, mystery, intactness, order, harmony or uniqueness of the scenery.

The East Face planning area has areas of Class A, Class B and C scenic attractiveness. The scenic attractiveness rating is applied to the process of evaluating the value of the area's scenery resource.

Sense of Place

The Scenery Management System increases the role of constituents throughout the inventory and planning process and borrows from, and is integrated with, the basic concepts of Ecosystem Management. The SMS pertains primarily to the social/cultural dimension of ecosystem management, but also has links to the biological and physical. A key element and one of the most important aspects of the new SMS process is sense of place and Special Places. Sense of place, for most people, refers to the rich and varied meanings of places and emphasizes people's tendency to form strong emotional bonds with places. The importance of this concept is that it places humans in the landscape and is a tool to help managers understand the importance of places to people when doing planning or management activities. Scenery contributes to a sense of place, a mutually shared image. The majority of the recreation-oriented people who visit the National Forests have an image of what they expect to see. Such an

image or mental picture is generated by available information concerning a particular area and the person's experience with that or similar areas (USDA, SMS, pg. 30).

The Wallowa-Whitman NF uses the Sense of Place definition in Appendix J : Sense of Place: *"The identity of a place created by people's social meanings and attachments, including valued scenery and recreation settings, cultural and spiritual values, economic, social and biophysical characteristics.*" Managers using the concept of sense of place must define a specific framework for the definition and use of sense of place. The sense of place for the East Face project area is tied to two primary distinct areas:

- Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway – Anthony Lakes Recreation Area and the numerous developed destination recreation sites located along the travel corridor.
- The "big backyard" with a variety of year round seasonal recreation activities that occur including developed and dispersed camping, hunting and other dispersed use.

The Forest Service has developed the Recreation NICHE process for recreation facilities analysis. This process was developed to define the particular recreation niche the forest could provide for the public. The Forest defined spatial units that had particular characteristics which could support a defined set of recreational experiences. The WWNF conducted a recreation facilities analysis which characterized the forest and defined spaces in terms of use and sense of place.

The project area lies primarily within the Blue Mountains. The characterization of this area is as follows:

W-W Niche Statement

A Forest's recreational program niche is reflective of its "defining or unique characteristics and abilities". For the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, this niche spans 2.3 million acres from the central Blue and Wallowa Mountains in northeast Oregon across the Snake River into the Seven Devils Mountains in western Idaho. These diverse landscapes distinguish the Forest's 3 main areas, Hells Canyon, the Wallowa Mountains, and the Blue Mountains. Visitors and local residents return to the Forest each year to enjoy a unique blend of: outstanding rugged scenery, backcountry and wilderness exploration; a variety of wild and scenic rivers and mountain lakes; and Native American and pioneer history.

Blue Mountains – Home of the Eagle Cap Wilderness, this setting is classically pristine with high alpine areas and powerful landscapes. Several Wild and Scenic rivers and high elevation lakes serve as destinations.

Existing Scenic Integrity

Every landscape changes over time, in turn, the landscape vegetative character continues to change whether it is actively managed or allowed to naturally evolve. In the East Face project area, there has been a change in historic vegetative species and vegetative patterns as described in the forest vegetative conditions narrative, (See Silviculture Existing Condition Report). The changes are mainly attributed to past timber sales and fire exclusion. In a majority of the area, the resulting patterns are becoming less sustainable in the long term due to high risk of future fire potential and existing disease outbreaks that contribute to trees dying and a degraded forested setting environment for the recreation settings and designated travel route viewsheds located in the area. There is a higher risk of wildfire in the as described in the fire and fuels narrative, (See Fire and Fuels Existing Condition Report). The species of vegetation and spatial distribution of plant communities that have been affected by or resulted from fire suppression activities are evident to visitors; however, they are not widely understood to be the result of human intervention in the fire regimes. These effects (different vegetation communities and understory vegetation) are relatively subtle from a visual standpoint and not strongly linked with the more common perception regarding fire, such as black and silver snags, brown needles and black charred trunks. For purpose of scenic analysis, subsequent references to the "effects of fire" refer to the obvious visual evidence that occurs as a direct result of fire rather than the subtle effects of different species of vegetation and spatial distribution of plant communities that are often in advanced succession. Vegetation patterns have changed from historic composition and pattern by fire suppression, timber harvest, and grazing over the last one hundred years.

Scenic integrity is the amount of human caused deviation in form, line, color, and texture of a landscape. Scenic integrity serves as a frame of reference for measuring scenic integrity levels based on the valued attributes of the existing landscape character being viewed. The degrees of integrity vary from VERY HIGH to VERY LOW.

Scenic Integrity is measured on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest through Visual Quality Objective levels defined by the USFS Visual Management System's Chapter 1 USDA Handbook # 462.
The following table displays the 6 scenic integrity levels and conditions associated with each level (how people perceive them).

Table . Scenic Integrity and Condition. *(USDA FS, 1995, Landscape Aesthetics, p A-1).*

Scenic Integrity Level	Condition
VERY HIGH (Preservation VQO)	Unaltered
HIGH (Retention VQO)	Appears Unaltered
MODERATE (Partial Retention VQO)	Slightly Altered
LOW (Modification VQO)	Moderately Altered
VERY LOW (Maximum Modification)	Heavily Altered
UNACCEPTABLE MODIFICATION	Unacceptably Altered

The existing scenic integrity of the East Face project area meets the visual quality objective of the Forest Plan and has a range of scenic integrity levels from HIGH to MODERATE viewed from Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, Interstate 84 and Anthony Lakes Recreation Area. Within the project area there are evidences of past activities. Partial removal treatments can be seen in partial retention areas, stumps are apparent. Along with the evidences of treatments are the indirect effects of additional variety in color and texture as deciduous shrubs and larch species have begun to take hold. Areas of retention visual quality objection are intact. The scenic integrity levels meet the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for a natural appearing foreground and middleground from the designated travel route of Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, Interstate 84, Anthony Lakes Recreation Area and developed recreation site viewsheds. There are some areas of moderately altered to slightly altered in some middleground and background areas.

Existing Scenic Stability

A new scenery indicator has been developed for use within the USFS Scenery Management System (applied in this analysis according to procedures described in the 9/20/06 Draft Appendix J of the SMS Handbook #701). Scenic stability is the degree to which the desired scenic character can be sustained through time and ecological progression. For the East Face project area, the existing scenic stability analysis focuses on the single major scenery attribute of vegetation, addressing its ecosystem conditions identified by field observation and Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) 7 coarse-scale data on vegetation and fire history data. Ecosystem changes to other minor scenery attributes such as landform, rock outcrops, and winter snowfall are not as critical to the East Face project area's scenic character as its vegetation, since these changes are relatively stable over time regardless of fire behavior and human activities.

Evaluating scenic stability is done by considering conditions necessary to sustain desired scenic character of stands within the natural and historic range of the landscape. Appropriate stand density, species composition, and fuel loads are necessary for stands to maintain the inherent characteristics through their lifecycle. When trends such as increasing stand density, encroachment of less resilient species, increasing fuel loads, and high levels of mortality exist, the expected consequences are change in the scenic character that are beyond the historic scale. Examples of these consequences are large canopy openings from intense wildfires, large stands of dead and dying timber, and loss of distinctive characteristic such as open, large tree character pine stands and multi-layered mixed species stands. Gradual trends over time have altered the species composition, stand structure, and age classes of the forest vegetation. Stands of large mature ponderosa pine that provide an open forest are diminished due to encroaching mixed conifer species, and past harvest practices that removed pine to release shade tolerant species.

For the East Face project area, the existing Scenic Stability analysis focuses on the single major scenery attribute of vegetation, addressing its ecosystem conditions and stresses identified by field observation and Fire Regime Conditon Class (FRCC) coarse-scale data on vegetation and fire history data.

Scenic stability levels are defined as follows:

Very High Stability—All dominant and minor scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained.
High Stability—All dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. However, there may be scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors that present a low risk to the sustainability of the dominant scenery attributes.
Moderate Stability—Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. A few may have been lost or are in serious decline.
Low Stability—Some dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are present and are likely to be sustained. Known scenery attribute conditions and ecosystem stressors may seriously threaten or have already eliminated the others.
Very Low Stability—Most dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are seriously threatened or absent due to their conditions and ecosystem stressors and are not likely to be sustained. The few that remain may be moderately threatened but are likely to be sustained.
No Stability—All dominant scenery attributes of the valued scenic character are absent or seriously threatened by their conditions and ecosystem stressors. None are likely to be sustained, except relatively permanent attributes such as landforms.

Fire Regime/Condition Class

The greatest hazard to scenery resources in this area are large stand replacement fires that would burn much more intensely due to the stocking levels, species compositions, ladder fuels and canopy closure that have developed over time, and large epidemics of insect or disease. The fire regime condition classes rate these factors and give an indication of the potential for fire intensity.

Fire Regimes displayed here are translated to forested biophysical groups.

Fire Regime Groups and Descriptions				
Fire Regime Group	**Vegetation Types**	**Frequency (Fire Return Interval)**	**Representative Potential Natural Vegetation Group (PNGV)**	**Severity**
1	All ponderosa pine types; Dry-Douglas fir/ pine grass; and grand fir/pine grass.	0 – 35 years	(PPDF1) Ponderosa pine Douglas-fir Inland Northwest	Low severity
2	True grasslands	0 – 35 yrs.	(MGRA1) Mountain Grassland	Stand replacing, high severity
3	Mixed Conifer	35 – 200+ yrs.	(GFDF) Grand fir – Douglas fir	Mixed severity
4	Lodge pole pine, western larch, spruce	35 – 200+ yrs	(SPFI5) Interior West Lower Subalpine Forest	Stand replacing, high severity
5	Wet meadows, discontinuous grass scabs on ridge tops	Greater than 200 years	(RIPA) Riparian	Mixed severity

The Eastface Project Area consists of cold upland forest which includes sub-alpine fir/grouse huckleberry, lodgepole/ grouse huckleberry, and grand fir/grouse huckleberry plant associations (37% of forested area), moist upland forest which includes lodgepole/ big huckleberry, sub-alpine fir/ big huckleberry, grand fir/twinflower and grand fir/big huckleberry plant associations (43% of forested area) and dry upland forest including Douglas-fir/elk sedge, Douglas-fir/pinegrass, ponderosa pine/bitterbrush, and grand fir/pinegrass plant associations (20% of forested area).

The following information is provided from the East Face Fire and Fuels Existing Conditions Report:

Condition Class: Condition class is a description of how far "current conditions" have deviated from historical conditions. Three condition classes have been developed to categorize the current condition with respect to each of the five historic fire regime groups. Current conditions are a function of the degree of departure from historical fire regimes resulting from alterations of key ecosystem components such as; species composition, vegetation structural stage, stand age, and canopy closure. The higher the condition class number the higher the relative risk of fire, insect, or disease caused losses to natural resources and other key ecosystem components. A higher condition class rating or percent from departure shows a higher risk of loss to key ecosystem components landscape wide.
The three condition classes are:

> **Condition Class 1**: Fire regimes are within or near historical ranges, and the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low. (Represents ecosystems with low departure (<33%) and that are still within an estimated historical range of variation as determined by modeling).
> **Condition Class 2**: Fire regimes have been moderately altered from their historical range. The risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate.(Represents ecosystems which have been moderately altered (33 to 66%) from the reference conditions).
> **Condition Class 3**: Fire regimes have significantly altered from their historical range. The risk of losing key ecosystem components is high. (Represents ecosystems with a high departure (>66%) from the reference conditions).

East Face Existing Fire Regime Condition Class						
Condition Class	Fire Regime 1	Fire Regime 2	Fire Regime 3	Fire Regime 4	Fire Regime 5	% of project area
1	4118	169	14024	3879	10	**50**
2	1070	145	8199	4599	0	**31**
3	3704	576	3793	510	0	**19**
% of project area	**20**	**1.9**	**58**	**20**	**.1**	

Fire Regime/Condition Class (FRCC)

The **FRCC 1 (Low)** corresponds to the definitions for "High" and "Very High" Scenic Stability levels described above. Both classifications have scenery attribute conditions that are within the range of natural or historic variability.
FRCC 2 (Moderate) corresponds to the definitions for "Moderate and Low" scenic stability. Both classifications include conditions outside the range of natural or historic variability.
FRCC 3 (High) corresponds to the definitions for "Very Low" and "No" Scenic Stability. They are far beyond the range of natural or historic variability.

The East Face Vegetation Management Project area is mostly in a higher level of low condition class 1 to moderate condition class 2 to high condition class 3 on a landscape scale, highly divergent from historical conditions.

Existing Scenic Stability Summary

The considerations to the stability of scenery resources in this project area are project stand conditions related to departure from historical fire regimes and tree density levels to determine overstocked conditions. The condition of most of the project area is the higher end of FRCC 2 (Moderate) to a FRCC 3 (High) which is moderate to low scenic stability on a landscape scale, moderately to highly divergent from historical conditions. The majority of the project area under current stand conditions has high fuel loadings and densely stocked canopies when compared to historical loadings for the fire regime that it occurs in.

These two factors create a ***moderately low scenic stability*** for the project area.

Overview of Issues Addressed

Issue Indicators

The three indicators used to measure the effects to scenery resources are landscape character, scenic integrity and scenic stability. These three indicators evaluate the intensity and duration of effects as well as the degree to which the alternatives would affect the stability of scenery attributes over the long term.

- Landscape Character is the naturally established landscape pattern in a geographic area that that makes each landscape identifiable or unique. It includes both the visual and cultural values and consists of the combination of physical, biological and cultural attributes that are valued by constituents. (SMS Handbook)

- Scenic Integrity is the degree to which the scenery is free from visible disturbances that detract from the natural and socially valued appearance, including disturbances due to human activities or extreme natural events inconsistent with the historic range of variability. (SMS Handbook)

- Scenic Stability is the degree to which the Desired Scenic Character can be sustained through time and ecological progression. (SMS- App. J)

Desired Condition

FOREST PLAN DIRECTION

Regulatory Framework

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) states that it is the "continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means to assure for all Americans, aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings." NEPA also requires "A systematic and interdisciplinary approach which would insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts into planning and decision-making which may have an impact on man's environment." To accomplish this, numerous Federal laws require all Federal land management agencies to consider scenery and aesthetic resources in land management planning, resource planning, project design, implementation, and monitoring.

Several USDA handbooks have been developed to establish a framework for management of visual resources, including, but not limited to:

- National Forest Landscape Management Volume 2, Chapter 1 the Visual Management System (Agriculture Handbook 462, USDA Forest Service 1974)
- Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management (Agriculture Handbook 701, USDA Forest Service 1995).

This evaluation applies current National Forest Scenery Management methodology in conjunction with existing Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Plan direction. The past land management plans were developed under the old Visual Management System (VMS) in 1974. The concept of that system was basically a visual resource snapshot in static time framework and was used mostly as a mitigation tool for forest management. A 1995 update called the Scenery Management System (SMS) was developed as a dynamic framework for scenery management. The framework describes scenery as a dynamic evolving concept and integrated into ecosystem management. Ecosystems provide the environmental context for this scenery management system. In 1995, the Forest Service adopted a new method of scenery management, called Landscape Aesthetics. The method is described in detail in *Forest Service Landscape Aesthetics, A Handbook for Scenery Management* 1995. This method includes new terminology for scenery management, but corresponds to, and incorporates the terms and direction found in the Forest Plan. In Landscape Aesthetics, Scenic Integrity corresponds to VQOs. Scenic Integrity is a measure of the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be "complete". This includes scenery sustainability concepts described in SMS Handbook Appendix J. It relies on field studies and photography from inventoried sensitive viewpoints and other views of the project area, as well as coordination with project interdisciplinary team (ID Team)

members, and consideration of public preferences for scenic quality. Cumulative scenic quality was within the geographic scope of travel route viewsheds and other viewpoints within and adjacent to the project.

Integration of this scenery analysis assures the East Face project area is consistent with scenery-related Wallowa-Whitman National Forest direction, USFS policies, and applicable elements of the USFS Visual Management and Scenery Management systems. Refer to Appendix B of the Scenery Management System Handbook #701 for a complete list of references requiring Forest Service management of scenery and aesthetics. The following paragraphs explain the integration of the two terms for Visual Quality objectives and Scenic Integrity Objectives.

In areas designated to Retention VQO, all foreground landscapes shall have the visitor perception of natural appearing and will have HIGH scenic integrity. *HIGH scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued Landscape Character "appears" intact. Deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the Landscape Character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident. (USDA FS, 1995, Landscape Aesthetics, p 2-4).*

In Partial Retention VQO areas the visitor will perceive a natural appearing to slightly altered landscape viewed in foreground and middleground areas and will have MODERATE scenic integrity. *MODERATE scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued Landscape Character "appears slightly altered". Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the Landscape Character being viewed. (USDA FS, 1995, Landscape Aesthetics, p 2-4).*

In areas allocated to Modification VQO, human activities would be visually evident, but should blend into the landscape by utilizing naturally established form, line, color and texture of the natural landscape. Modification areas would have LOW scenic integrity. *LOW scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued Landscape Character "appears moderately altered". Deviations begin to dominate the valued Landscape Character being viewed but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes or architectural styles outside the landscape being viewed. They should not only appear as valued character outside the landscape being viewed but compatible or complimentary to the character within. (USDA FS, 1995, Landscape Aesthetics, p 2-4).*

Landscape Scenic Viewsheds

The project area is approximately 47,621 acres located of national forest and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands located on the east face of the Elkhorn Mountains between Anthony Lakes and Ladd Canyon. Due to the large spatial area, the East Face project area has been divided into 4 separate landscape areas for assessing scenic effects based on landscape visibility and sensitivity levels for scenic travel routes. The Visual Quality Objectives (VQO's) are designated from Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway, Interstate 84, Anthony Lakes Recreation Area and several secondary forest travel routes. The 4 landscape areas are:

Travel Route	VQO Foreground	VQO Middleground	VQO Background
Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway (State Highway 73) and Interstate I-84	Retention VQO (High Scenic Integrity)	Retention VQO to Partial Retention VQO (High to Moderate Scenic Integrity)	Partial Retention VQO (Moderate Scenic Integrity)
Anthony Lakes Recreation Area	Retention VQO (High Scenic Integrity)	Retention VQO (High Scenic Integrity)	Partial Retention VQO to Modification VQO
Forest Road 43 Ladd Canyon to Anthony Lakes Recreation Area	Mostly Partial Retention (Moderate) Some Modification (Low)	Partial Retention to Modification VQO	NA
North Fork Wolf Creek Forest Road 4315	Partial Retention to Modification VQO	Partial Retention to Modification VQO	NA

Foreground is based on landscape visibility and is defined as views up to ½ mile distance zone, middleground is ½ mile to 4 miles distance zone and background is 4 miles to the horizon from the travelway and use areas. Additional information and descriptions regarding Visual Quality Objectives (VQO's) may be found in the Forest Service

Scenery Management System (USDA Forest Service, 1995) and the Visual Management System (USDA Forest Service 1974) National Forest Landscape Management Handbooks. The project area is seen as immediate foreground (views up to 300 feet distance), foreground (views up to ½ mile distance) and middleground (views up to 4 miles distance) from several viewsheds and viewpoints
The following describes the goal, standards and guidelines for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest plan:

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest LRMP (1990)

Goal: Landscape Management: To manage all National Forest lands to obtain the highest possible visual quality, commensurate with other appropriate public uses, cost and benefits.

Standards and Guidelines

1. VQO's. Meet visual quality objective through management techniques described in National Forest Landscape Management, Volumes 1 and 2, and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Visual Management Plan.
2. Retention Foreground. In retention foregrounds the area regenerated per decade should not exceed 7 percent or be less than 3 percent of the suitable forest land within the viewshed. Maximum seen area disturbed at any one time should not exceed 10 percent within any viewshed. Limit regeneration unit size to that which meets retention and desired character including consideration of future entries and regrowth. The approximate range of sizes necessary to accomplish this is ½ to 2 acres in the immediate foreground (less than 500 feet) and 3 to 5 acres in the foreground greater than 500 feet from the road or trail. Units against road or trail edges should be shelterwoods or selection cuts rather than clearcuts. Target tree size is 36 inches where biologically feasible.
3. Partial Retention Foreground and Retention Middleground. In partial retention foreground and retention middleground, the area regenerated per decade should not exceed 9 percent or be less than 5 percent of the suitable forest land within and viewshed. The maximum seen area disturbed at any one time should not exceed 14 percent of any viewshed. Limit regeneration unit size to that which meets partial retention and desired character including consideration of future entries and regrowth. The approximate range of sizes necessary to accomplish this is ½ to 2 acres in the immediate foreground (less than 500 feet) and 3 to 5 acres in the foreground greater than 500 feet from the road or trail. Target size tree in foreground is 26 inches where biologically feasible.
4. Partial Retention Middleground. In partial retention middleground, the area regenerated per decade should range between 8 and 10 percent. Limit maximum regeneration unit size to 10 acres. Maximum area disturbed at any one time should not exceed 20 percent.
5. Created Openings. Consider a created opening to no longer be an opening, visually, when trees reach 20 feet in height. Rotation periods will be sufficient to grow large tree character in viewshed foregrounds.
6. Resolving Conflicts. Where conflicts develop between visual quality objectives and timber or range management objectives, these conflicts will be resolved in favor of meeting the visual objectives. Where conflicts occur between old-growth objectives and visual objectives, old –growth will have priority.

Desired Landscape Character

The desired landscape character is to promote a sustainable landscape character specific to each ecotype of the forest. All naturally established existing landscape patterns throughout the forest are to be maintained with changes that will not degrade the existing character. Areas where unnatural landscape character exists from past management practices can be improved through rehabilitation or enhancement to promote landscape character that is scenically and ecologically attractive. The goal of scenery management is to promote landscape character that is naturally appearing and will be scenically sustainable in time by reducing some risk of large scale disturbances, through wildfire or insect and disease infestations that are out of scale for the vegetative character type.